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THERE IS AN ALTERNATIVE,  
A MANAGEMENT DECISION

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ABSTRACT

Aerospace workers, whether employed or unemployed, must assess their present status and goals. They have no alternative in the face of the realities of current reassignment of priorities. The need for reassignment of our environment and for improvement in operation of governmental units, from local to national, confronts not only government but also business, unions, and the whole of society. Management decisions are truly imperatives. But none is more important than the individual, personal decision by the persons directly involved. This paper analyzes questions to aid in personal, individual, management decision making.

INTRODUCTION

The thrust of our space effort, during the past decade, has occurred concurrently with other great changes in our society. Comparing present social anxiety with that which prevailed in the fifteenth-century, Max Ways quotes Erik Erikson in *Young Man Luther*, "Everything expanding opens frontiers, every conquest exposes flanks."<sup>1</sup>

Is there a feasible way to reallocate some of the resources of talent and ability, available in the space community, to other areas of equally great challenge? Is there an alternative to the highly precarious status quo? There should be. The affirmative answer to these two questions is an expression of management philosophy presented in pragmatic, practicable terms.

The discussion reveals avenues of approach wherein scientists, engineers, and technicians may:

First, examine the broad relevancy of their talents and abilities,

Second, achieve a greater awareness of the value of integration among the separate scientific disciplines, and

Third, make the decision to become involved in generating solutions to the problems.

DISCUSSION

Space exploration has utilized the talents and abilities from nearly every professional discipline and from nearly every craft and skill. Scientists, engineers, and technicians were recruited from wherever they could be found. Whoever could contribute was solicited to join the program inspired by President Kennedy's challenge, "Place a man on the moon by 1970."

It was done. Two men walked on the moon for more than two and a half hours on July 20th, 1969.

Newly named disciplines, technical skills, and descriptive terms evolved from the process of getting to the moon. The words *space* and *astronautics* became associated with these new terms. For example, now you can find "bioastronautics" in the dictionary. A friend of mine, who used to be a "flight mechanic," now is a "spacecraft technician."

These past ten years are a bright patch of brilliance on the cloth of history. A century of progress in a decade.

The Eighth Space Congress at Cocoa Beach, Florida, examines the wide spectrum suggested by its theme, "Technology Today and Tomorrow." What does this theme mean to us, "Technology Today and Tomorrow"? Does tomorrow mean next year, or the next decade?

We should take two looks at tomorrow. First, a short term view and then, a long term view.

While we gather here to consider the future of space technology and space exploration, thousands of ex-space workers are drawing unemployment compensation. Fortunately, not all their purchasing power has been cut off and the multiplier effect still functions. It could be worse.

How much less difficult a situation this is than the hard years which followed 1929. Then, many men stood in bread lines, without hope. Now, as a result of government planning and action, there is a cushion at the lower sweep of the economic curve. This is a social accomplishment in answer to crisis.

If we were to agree that not enough progress has been made in this direction, then we might agree with George Cabot Lodge when he points out, thoughtfully,

Without a new vision of public-private interaction to bind our efforts together, any actions business and government may take to solve the massive problems of environmental control ... and the like, will necessarily become halfway measures.<sup>2</sup>

If you are presently employed, do not look down on those who are not. When an employer *fails* to obtain new contracts, he has no alternative to reducing his forces. For example, one employer with more than one hundred thousand employees was forced to cut back 48%. Many highly qualified, carefully trained, uniquely talented scientists, engineers, and technicians found themselves out of a job.

Is this a situation of maladjustment? It is. Is it a management challenge for government, business, unions, and society? It is. Perhaps more important, this is an opportunity for individual, personal management decision making.

What does one do when he is no longer employed in the space industry? Particularly, after having been in the business for from ten to twenty years? Particularly, if he were hired fresh out of college, perhaps before he completed his degree? And, particularly, if he has never *competed* in the job market?

Faced with such a situation, he must make decisions concerning allocating resources.

What resources? His own resources; talent, ability, and interest. The prime word is *interest*. Lack of interest makes old men of youngsters at age thirty. Lively interest in what is going on in the rest of the world and self motivated interest in seeking opportunity keeps men young at ninety.

What kinds of decisions are we asking about? We are asking about personal, individual, management decisions.

Is this something new for men to do? No. Men have faced similar challenges throughout history. For those who *do not* or *will not* make the necessary decisions, history has made the decisions.

Changes, not only in technology but also in assignment of priority, have either caused or precipitated decision making within the experiences of each of us.

Let us look back just a few years. For example, in the 1920's, liverymen and black-

smiths faced the need for choosing among alternatives. As automobiles replaced the horsedrawn vehicles, there were those who decided to continue as liverymen and horseshoers. Liverymen and horseshoers are to be found today. It is possible to find them in such places as New York's Central Park and at Disneyland. Their numbers are few.

Other liverymen and blacksmiths decided to adjust to changing times. They opened garages and filling stations. They learned to service and to repair the evergrowing quantities of autos, many of which broke down, often. (They still break down, after fifty years of applied technology!)

There was a third alternative, chosen by a few. Faced with change, some quietly - or not so quietly, called it quits, threw in the towel. They did not try *hard* enough. They allowed economic neurosis to defeat them. Finally, in despair, they sat on the bench in the shade and bemoaned their fate.

Many space workers are faced with similar kinds of decision making but under different circumstances. Space travel still looms ahead. And, it *will* come. However, the number of workers required to accomplish the program goals will not be as great as heretofore. Not even if the Congress were to loose the purse strings to the extent proponents of space might wish.

The change we face is not so much one of superseding technology as one of shifting emphasis, reassignment of priorities. Our society's interest in space has been dampened. It is extremely difficult for us to acknowledge and to accept that within less than two hundred miles from Cape Kennedy there are people who have a hard time relating the word *Apollo* with the moon. Or, that in our Nation's capital, *Spacetalk* is definitely not "IN" at cocktail hour.

Man has been to the moon...and back. That "great leap" has been achieved. There are many who feel now that any further adventure of this nature is anticlimax. They feel that being able to cruise through the voids of space at 25,000 miles per hour is not as important as being able to get to work, on earth, in less than an hour.

Do not be discouraged. Christopher Columbus died a disheartened man. However, voyages of discovery and exploration *were* undertaken with great intensity during the one hundred fifty years after his passing.

Voyages of discovery and exploration are still in vogue. In 1958 there was another *first*. It was the first Polar crossing, *under the ice*, made by submarine *Nautilus*. Since then, in 1960, the submarine *Triton* completed the first circumnavigation of the earth, *underwater*. Just last year, 1970, a

tanker *Manhattan* became the first commercial ship to cross through the Polar ice.

For the long look, there is great promise for the future in space.

For the short look, we must have an awareness of the present. It is evident now that our society's attention is directed toward great opportunities other than space. Concern for control and care of our environment and for improvement in operation of government units overshadow space, now. The difficulties associated with these problems are numberless. No need for me to reiterate them here. They are reported copiously in many media.

We cannot quarrel with those who maintain that the problems are crucial. Attention to them is demanded from all of us. Response to them requires action and participation from nearly every professional discipline and from practically every craft and skill. Are not these the words we used when we described the needs of the space effort?

The effects of these problems cut across every sector of our country. They slice through every level of our society. Today, young people have the greatest opportunity to improve the world that has ever awaited any generation. These young persons give us strong signs of recognizing many of the deficiencies in our present culture. They sorely need direction and guidance toward the sources from where solutions may come.

*This* is where you become involved. *Here* is where your talents can be important. *Now* is when you can contribute, whether you are employed or unemployed.

You must make a personal decision. You must answer these questions:

1. How can I help my community and my country?
2. How shall I use my ability, my knowledge, and my interest?

Those two questions are vital.

If you do *not* answer these questions, then history *will* answer them for you. You must accept the challenge of becoming involved in the affairs of the community. If you are presently employed, you can participate on a part time basis. You may find the adventure engrossing to the point that ultimately it may engage your total effort.

Remember, we are talking about a *decision* not a wish. For evil to triumph, all that is required is for good men to do nothing.

When you accept the task you set before yourself, there are additional questions

to help you. For example: Have you taken any courses lately which advance your own *state of the art*? Have you initiated any research in the field where you can contribute?

One incentive would be to prepare a paper to submit to your technical society, or to the *Ninth Space Congress*.

OR have you been coasting at your desk because no specific, exciting task has come down from above to interest you?

Tasks which could interest you are arrayed in a broad spectrum. Whatever your background, you need not go far afield to find an area of interest where you can utilize much of the knowledge and skill you possess presently.

In addition, you can prepare yourself to a greater extent and augment your decision by reading articles and books by persons who are accomplished in a pertinent field. You can become an *expert*. You can do this by spending just one hour a day, for one year, on directed reading. Your schiement can be equated with five college courses. With this amount of additional concentration, who could dispute your expertise?

Make your decision. Become involved. Implement your decision. Thinking and talking about it accomplishes little. One thing is certain, *nothing* will happen until you *decide* that it will.

## CONCLUSION

During the past ten years, many changes in our society have taken place concurrently with our advances in exploration of space. The goal which captured the imagination of the nation, landing a man on the moon, has been passed. With its passing, society has shifted emphasis to other challenges which are pressing and insistent. Space workers, whether they are employed or unemployed, must assess their present status and goals. They can, they must, make personal, individual management decisions to become involved in the affairs of their community and to carry out national policies, locally. This involvement should be directed toward the achievement of solutions to:

Controlling and preserving our environment and

Improving the operation of governmental units, from local to national.

But, nothing fruitful will happen in your life until you make your own personal, individual, management decision.

#### REFERENCES

- (1) Ways, Max, "Finding the American Direction," Fortune, October, 1970, p. 128.
- (2) Lodge, George Cabot, "Top Priority: Renovating Our Ideology," Harvard Business Review, Harvard University, Boston, September-October, 1970.